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By the Grace of Lacan

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> A notion as precise and articulate as grace is irreplaceable where the psychology of the act is concerned, and we don't find anything equivalent in classic academic psychology. Not only doctrines, but also the history of choices . . . they demand all of our attention in their own register and mode of expression.[1]

Introduction

GRACE HOLDS AN ABIDING fascination for Lacan.[2] Notice his admonition in the opening quotation to its treatment from within its own "register," i.e., theology. This is a concern repeated in *Seminar VII* when he critiques the anthropological category of "religion" in the name of religion "in the true sense of the term—not of a desiccated, methodologized religion, pushed back into the distant past of a primitive form of thought, but of religion as we see it practised in a still living, very vital way."[3] In a different context,

1. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1999) 171.

2. I thank Marika Rose for her helpful discussion on this point.

3. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, (London: Vintage, 1998) 7.

when Lacan introduces grace in *Seminar XVI*, he does so somewhat ruefully in regard of theological rigor: Grace is "something about which we no longer even know how to speak."[4] And when chastising the psychoanalytic community in his 1953 "Rome Report" he contrasts their failure to "frame subjective problems" with the rigor "that structured the old quarrels about Nature and Grace however confused they might have been."[5] Indeed, he felt so strongly about this that following the publication of the "Rome Report" in *Écrits*, some thirteen years after its initial presentation, he directed his seminar audience to this very point: it is to grace that "instead of a thousand other futile occupations, psychoanalysts should turn their gaze."[6]

Theologically speaking, grace is traditionally if broadly understood as the supernatural gift of God, thereby implying not simply a giving, but also the benevolence of the giving as well as the gift, and hence thanksgiving. That these classical themes are not taken up by Lacan may suggest that he was less concerned with the "register of expression" than indicated. Yet as I argue that Lacan showed a deep commitment to the way grace delineates human relations, drawing on the classical distinction between a given truth to be realized and a revelation of truth. So while he does not entertain different theological positions regarding grace, it is the very fact of a revelation of grace that counts for him.

Lacan's comments on grace are scattered across his corpus and do not form a systematic whole, however, his reading of Pascal's wager from *Seminar XIII: The Object of Psychoanalysis*, and *Seminar XVI: From an Other to the other* provides a particularly pertinent source of reflection given Lacan's claim: "how can we, even for an instant, when it is a matter of game imagined by Pascal's pen, neglect the function of grace, namely, that of the desire of the Other."[7]

In what follows I want to take Lacan's treatment of Pascal as the means to explore the importance he attaches to grace. While my discussion principally revolves around Pascal's wager, I shall use the divisions: knowledge, the o-object, and enjoyment to guide my initial enquiry. Taken together, these areas form the relevant locus of subjective relations, relative to the

4. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Seminar XIII: The Object of Psychoanalysis, 1965–1966*, trans. Cormac Gallagher. Unpublished. 9.2.66, Lecture x, 5.

5. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006) 218. In *Seminar XX* he commends in particular the rigor of Aquinas: "it's awfully well put together." Cf. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Seminar XX: Encore, 1972–1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1999) 114.

6. Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture x, 6.

7. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Seminar XVI: From an Other to the other, 1968–1969*, trans. C. Gallagher. Unpublished, 29.1.69 lecture ix, 10.

phase of Lacan's work on Pascal. In this way I am able to relate the wager back to the structure of subjectivity. I then explore the role of grace and revelation as it relates to Lacan's excurses on Exod 3:11: God's utterance at Sinai. What transpires is that grace not only names a theological problem, but the central problematic of subjectivity, and the platform for Lacan's critique of philosophy.

I begin with Lacan's methodological considerations on the treatment of theology within his work.

Against Apologetics

Given the initial comments from Lacan on grace, one should begin by recognizing Lacan's insistence that his treatment of theological ideas or history not be confused with the "position of religious apologetics."[8] Indeed, he goes to some lengths to stress this very point. For example, when discussing time spent reading a little around Pascal and Jansenism, he quickly adds that this was "naturally not to inform myself about Jansenism"[9] and continuing, "I will not say anything more about what is involved in my relationship to it, it would be too good an opportunity to precipitate yourself into the historical or biographical determinations of my interests."[10] Lacan displays here a clear reticence to identify with the religious dimension.

Such reticence recalls similar expressions of concern on the part of Lacan about over-speculating the relationship of his work to theology. For example, speaking some three years prior he says "Things have in fact got to the point that, having let slip recently in one of the interviews that I spoke to you about, that I had got my taste for commentary from an old practice of the scholastics, I asked them to take it out. God knows what people would have deduced from it (*laughter*)."[11]

One way to read Lacan on this matter is in terms of the methodological focus he brings to bear upon psychoanalysis. Where previously the direction of treatment was oedipal in direction; i.e., exploring what Cormac Gallagher calls "the banality of childhood experiences that are supposed to explain the subject's current behavior,"[12] his focus shifts to the very "structure

8. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture xxii, 2.

9. Ibid., lecture viii, 2.

10. Ibid.

11. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan, Book XIV: The Logic of Phantasy*, trans. Cormac Gallagher. Unpublished. 7.12.66 lecture vi, 4.

12. Gallagher, "From an Other to the other: An Overview," *The Letter* 21 (2001) 1–27, 10.

of the subject itself."[13] As Gallagher points out, Lacan's engagement with Pascal falls within this post-Oedipal period from the late 1960s to early 1970s.[14] During this period Lacan was confronted by a new audience that included philosophers and anthropologists as well as training analysts, theologians, and the like. As such he began to recast psychoanalysis in the language of contemporary logic and set theory, drawing for example, upon the work of Frege, Bertrand Russell, Cantor, and Pascal. In doing so he claimed to develop a formal logic, the first of such to supersede Aristotelian logic to the extent it introduced a new conceptual object, the o-object, or *objet petit a*: the dispositional object by which enjoyment is measured and to which I shall return.[15]

This shift in focus was accompanied by a coterminous shift in how the clinic should operate: the oedipal clinic gives way to the clinic of the real. In the clinic of the real, what matters is the structure of the subject as it stands in relation to knowledge, enjoyment, and the o-object. As Lacan says,

> It is not enough to match the interpersonal relations of an adult with the second biography that we take to be original, that of his infantile relations. . . . It is not enough to discover a simple homology by going into the past with someone who comes to tell us about his present-day relations. . . . This quite often only conceals the question from us, the one we analysts should really question ourselves about . . . the style of presence in which each of these three terms knowledge, enjoyment and o-object were effectively presented to the subject.[16]

In other words, we should not be led by the theology in Lacan's work to posit something about Lacan as such; rather, we should ask: what can we learn structurally about the subject by recourse to theology.

In the following sections I will take Lacan's three terms (knowledge, enjoyment and the o-object) as a means to organize Lacan's reading of the wager and the role of grace therein.

13. Ibid.

14. Gallagher, "From Freud's Mythology of Sexuality to Lacan's Formulae of Sexuation," *The Letter* 38 (2006) 1–9, 7.

15. Ibid.

16. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture xxi, 7—8.

Knowledge

In the "Rome Report" of 1966, an amended footnote by Lacan indicates that it is through his encounter with Pascal that he is "forced . . . to take the whole thing up again [grace] in order to reveal the inestimable value it conceals for the analyst."[17] The suggestion here is that the demand to take grace seriously indicates something specific about what grace offers conceptually for psychoanalysis. Indeed, during the course of *Seminar XVI* he boldly claims in enigmatic fashion that "the measure, in which Christianity interests us, I mean at the level of theory, can be measured precisely by the role given to Grace."[18] Grace is the point of contact between Christianity and psychoanalysis, and hence any discussion between the two disciplines must start with grace.

For Pascal the question of grace was colored by his Jansenist leanings which, following the Calvinist line, emphasized the depravity of human nature and hence the necessity of a divine and predestined grace. Yet, because of sin humans cannot discern the will of God in regard of their own salvation, or indeed what one should do to achieve that salvation. Henri Gouhier[19] claims that predestination is the axiomatic basis of Pascalian vision of the world,[20] and Lacan informs his listeners that it is Gouhier he has been consulting.

So, when Lacan says that grace concerns the function of "the desire of the Other," the implication is that our inability to discern the will of God because of sin is the model of the subjective relation, and the obscurity of the desire of the Other. And because Pascal's wager addresses the problem of the Other, albeit the existence of the Other, Lacan is able to map the question of desire onto the wager.

I will now take up Lacan's reading of Pascal's wager. While collated under the rubric *Penseés*, Pascal's wager was written on a quite separate piece of paper, and it is this slip of paper that Lacan begins with. For those unfamiliar, the slip upon which the wager was written bears irregular crease marks, and obtuse lines dissecting the page. The wager itself is written at varying degrees to the page with lines are crossed out, and paragraphs inserted. It is, as Lacan points out, as if it were kept in a pocket close to his

17. Lacan, *Écrits*, 266 n. 14.

18. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture viii, 3.

19. Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture ix, 4. Henri Gouhier was the president of the exam board that oversaw the defense of Michael Foucault's main thesis in 1961.

20. John McDade, "The Contemporary Relevance of Pascal," *New Blackfriars* 91 (2010) 185–96.

heart—recalling another piece of paper found stitched into lining of Pascal's doublet following his death.[21]

The other piece of paper Lacan refers to is Pascal's "Memorial," a small scrap recalling the night of his mystical conversion, the so-called "night of fire"[22] in which Pascal records his encounter with the "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scholars. Certainty, certainty, heartfelt, joy, peace. God of Jesus Christ."[23]

The suggestion here is that the wager and the Memorial are related to the extent that in both cases a step is taken by Pascal, away from an Other—the God of the philosophers—toward the "other" God; *from an Other to the other*:

> For Pascal the question is settled. Another little piece of paper sewn more deeply than in a pocket, under a lining, "not the God of the philosophers but the God of Abraham . . . of Isaac and of Jacob" shows us the step that has been taken, and that what is at stake is not at all the supreme being.[24]

To translate this into the philosophical parlance of Heidegger, what is staged here as far as Lacan is concerned is the theological critique of onto-theology. And it is the theological critique of philosophy that serves Lacan as a "correlate" to the questioning of truth in the unconscious.[25]

To clarify this correlation one should recall the background events to *Seminar XVI*.[26] Student protests were in full swing, advancing a critique of the University for its role in the commodification of knowledge. Although Lacan famously spoke out against the movement he also voiced his sympathy with it. He too was concerned with the status of knowledge, and in particular with knowledge as it pertains to the field of psychoanalysis. The barb of Lacan's critique is aimed at the self-assuredness of the Cartesian cogito which works on the basis of what can be known. In this way, it precludes the possibility of the Freudian claim: "I do not know." In other words, psychoanalysis does not concern knowledge as much as the failure of knowledge:

> This truth which is the one that we question in the unconscious as creative failure of knowledge, as the original point of the desire to know, is the schema that comes from a knowledge

21. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture vii, 3.

22. John Cole, *Pascal: The Man and His Two Loves* (New York: New York University Press, 1995) 105.

23. Francis Coleman, *Neither Angel Nor Beast: The Life and Work of Blaise Pascal* (New York: Routledge, 1986) 60.

24. Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture iv, 6.

25. Lacan, *SXVI*, 23.4.69. 12–14.

26. Gallagher, "From an Other to the other," 1–27.

> condemned never to be in a way anything but the correlate of this failure. . . . Do we not sense here at least one of the essential correlates of what is put forward in our epoch about a so-called end of philosophy?[27]

As the above suggests, Pascal's critique of the God of the philosophers serves in advance of Lacan's critique of unconscious knowledge, and hence Lacan uses Pascal as a means to develop a way of speaking which takes into account precisely the "failure of knowledge," or as Gallaher puts it: "to hint at the presence of a truth, at the revelation of an o-object in a way that conventional academic teaching is unable to do.[28] For this reason, Lacan resists identifying the God of Pascal with the "*imaginary* plane" precisely because "it is not the god of philosophers; it is not even the god of any knowledge. We do not know, writes Pascal, either what he is, or of course, even if he is."[29] Pascal belongs to the plane of the real.

Said otherwise, the God of the philosophers correlates to "this Other" the "locus where knowledge is established in *the subject supposed to know*";[30] "This big Other is One."[31] However, as Lacan is quick to remind his audience, the Other "is not unrelated to the fact that there is a God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob."[32]

The key phrase in the above is "not unrelated." The double negative affirms a link, albeit through the negative. We become subjects to the extent we are interpolated into the symbolic (the Other). The symbolic is particularized for each subject. The "Other" is the locus in which/out of which speech is constituted. Lacan's point then is that because the field of the Other stands in advance of the subject "you cannot escape, you are already on board; this is what the signifier *supports*, everything that we grasp as subject, we are in the wager."[33]

This is one way to interpret Lacan's rendering of Freud's *Wo Es war, soll Ich warden* [where it/id was, I/ego shall become]: "It is there, in the Other, that there is the unconscious structured like a language."[34]

All of this is, for Lacan, by way of grasping Pascal's initial point, against those who might say "he who chooses heads and he who chooses tails are

27. *Seminar XVI*, lecture xvii, 12–14.
28. Gallagher, "From an Other to the other," 8.
29. *Seminar XVI*, lecture x, 7 (emphases mine).
30. Ibid., lecture xxii, 7.
31. Lacan, *SXV*, lecture xxii, 4.
32. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture xxii, 3.
33. Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture x, 6.
34. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture xiv, 11.

equally at fault, they are both in the wrong. The true course is not to wager at all." On Lacan's reading, it is because the field of the Other stands in advance of the subject that "you cannot escape, you are already on board; this is what the signifier *supports*, everything that we grasp as subject, we are in the wager."[35]

In this way the wager recalls Lacan's excursus on the *forced choice* from *Seminar XI*, and allows a more persistent thread to surface in Lacan's work: the question of subjectivity is posed in terms of a dilemma, a wager, a game as such.[36] In *Seminar XI*, it is the highwayman's question that provides the clue to the subject's status: "Your money or your life!" As Lacan argues, the dilemma poses a false dichotomy as if there was a choice between two things (hence the use of the disjunctive "or"). However, as Lacan explains, there is no choice: "Your money or your life!" If I choose the money, I lose both. If I choose life, I have life without the money, namely, a life deprived of something."[37] To put this into psychoanalytic terms we can draw upon Adrian Johnston's bold rendering: "Your *jouissance* or your life!" In choosing life, the subject forfeits *jouissance* (i.e., castration—we cannot have the man or woman of our dreams); however, if the subject chooses *jouissance*, then he forfeits his very life and hence the promise of *jouissance* (i.e., if the subject does get to sleep with the man or woman of his dreams, s/he quickly discerns that the transitory experience of sex "isn't it!"[38]

In sum, it is not a question of *not* wagering; rather we *must* choose if we are to count as subjects. And the wager as Cleo puts it "records the fact that it is impossible to escape the above alternative and that it is our real; that we live, act and think only within this alternative which is our real."[39] In other words, existence *is* a matter of wager, *the absolute wager*. So it is not just that we must wager, but that the qualitative experience of the real testifies to a subjective position that amounts to a wager:

> The matter [of the wager], what could be its matter, is the radical wording that is the formulation of the real, as it can be conceived and as it can be touched with one's finger, that is not conceivable to fancy another limit of the knowledge as the stopping point where we are only concerned with this: with something

35. Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture x, 6.

36. Lacan, *SXI*, 203–15.

37. Ibid., 212.

38. Adrian Johnston, "The Forced Choice of Enjoyment: *Jouissance* between Expectation and Actualization," http://www.lacan.com/forced.htm.

39. Jean-Pierre Clero, "Lacan and Probability," http://www.jehps.net/Decembre2008/Clero.pdf.

> indivisible, that whether it is, or not. In other words, something that falls in the province of heads or tails . . . The absolute real, on this little page, is what is expressed as heads or tails.[40]

And because the wager is what defines existence, Lacan introduces a qualification of the real not encountered anywhere in *Écrits*: "The absolute real."

To sum up the preceding discussion, it can be argued that for Lacan, grace principally belongs to the theological discourse, not the philosophical, to the extent it concerns not knowledge as such, but non-knowledge; i.e., an encounter with the real. The real names a quality of existence, which the wager brings into focus. And it is what the wager brings into focus that matters, because the wager defines the structural position the subject is faced with. Hence, given the wager, it is not a matter of choosing as such; to recognize the dilemma of the wager is to already *be graced*; i.e., to have chosen in one sense.

To draw a upon a theological analogy, to posit freedom as a realm of autonomy in which we might freely and therefore lovingly choose God is to misrecognise freedom as a sphere of autonomy—free of God as such; because if God gives freedom that we might choose him, then the very possibility of freedom is already a sign of God. Similarly for Lacan, we misrecognise the wager if we interpret it as a choice for God/the Big Other; the very possibility of the wager is already to be interpolated into the Big Other; to have already been chosen and to experience the uncertainty of grace.

The O-Object

If we must wager, what are the stakes? Lacan translates the stakes Pascal identifies as "infinity or nothing," to which he also refers to as a "formulation of the real."[41] In effect Lacan reads the wager in the manner one might develop the negative of a polaroid. So for Lacan the emphasis within his rendering of the wager falls not upon winning infinity, but losing "nothing." For Lacan, it is not simply that we have nothing to lose by wagering, but rather, we risk losing precisely this "nothing." Lacan's point is "nothing is not nothing," rather "it is something that can be put on the scales, and very

40. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture viii, 4–5.

41. Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture lx, 8.

specifically at the level we have put it in the wager."[42] In Lacanese, "what is at stake is the absolute real"[43]—God *as the Nothing*.

The real can mapped in terms of subject and the Other. To take the latter first: As Lacan says, when we say "I wager that God exists or" we introduce this referent—the Other or the big Other which is marked by the bar of castration and which "reduces him [the subject] to the alternative of existence or not, and to nothing else."[44] The Other is situated within the symbolic, it stands for what is both constitutive and yet empty. In this way, Lacan is able to relate the Other to the function of a name: *The Name of the Father*, "a singular form . . . to carefully locate at the level of the wager."[45] Lacan's point is that a Name, while pivotal in establishing a discourse, "depends precisely on the fact that after all, you can never know who the father is. You can always look, it is a question of faith."[46] In other words, every discourse invites a wager on the Other which orders the field and yet remains unknown.

As Lacan points out, this is what makes Pascal's wager distinct from the usual type of wager. Whereas traditionally one wagers against another partner, what is at the stake in the case of Pascal's is the existence *of* the partner, which arises at the point one designates the "function of lack."[47] In other words the wager amounts to a "*fore*-throw," made in the hope of God who is "here" yet is never "there."[48]

Taken from the perspective of the subject, lack is encountered in terms of the o-object. The symbolic is the cultural means of subjectification. The "o" object locates the subject in terms of desire, and its relation to an Other, because the "o" arises within the field of the Other. In other words, it is through the process of becoming Other that we meet the o-object; in the process, something—the "o"—"falls away," and thereby establishing the subject as desiring subject, not unlike the cotton reel in Freud's fort da [gone/there] game.

For Freud the game was the means to master the loss of the mother. For Lacan however the game stages the basic linguistic/phonic distinction which gives rise to symbolic life: it is the instantiation of the subject through

42. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture viii, 12–13.

43. Ibid., 5.

44. Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture x, 8.

45. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture viii, 5.

46. Ibid., lecture ix, 14.

47. Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture x, 6.

48. Louis Armand, "Symptom in the Machine: Lacan, Joyce, Sollers," http://www.lacan.com/sympmach.htm.

the division of language, during which a small object falls: the object cause of desire or o-object:

> I am introducing the question here, to this always fleeting, always hidden object, to what is after all hope or despair the essence of our desire, to this unnamable, ungraspable, unarticulatable object and, nevertheless, that Pascal's wager is going to allow us to affirm . . . the (o) as cause of desire and value which determines it, is what is involved in the Pascalian stake.[49]

So on the one hand the "absolute" wager concerns the Other (the subject supposed to Know), and more specifically the existence of the Other; on the other the wager also "incarnates . . . the object lost for the subject in every engagement with the signifier."[50] To further draw out the implications in terms of grace and the o-object, we need first to understand how all of this bears on enjoyment.

Enjoyment

Desire and enjoyment are "linked to the division of the subject."[51] In tackling the question of enjoyment, Lacan turned to Pascal's game-theory. As Lacan notes, first: game (*jeu*) in French also implies enjoyment; second, Pascal makes enjoyment the stake of the wager when he warns that an "infinity of infinitely happy lives" is to be lost.

The problem out of which modern game theory grew was initially posed by Luca Pacioli (1445–1517), the subject of Pascal's exchange with Fermat. It concerned how to divide fairly the stakes of a game in the case that the game is interrupted with hands yet to be dealt.[52] Notice how the problematic begins with a chance (*hazard*) encounter, an instance of what Lacan calls the "real *qua* impossible" or *tuché*.[53] The aim is to avoid annulling the game and returning the initial shares, or simply awarding the share to the existing winner. Pascal's triangular display of binomial coefficients solves this problem and in doing so offers an oblique commentary on the status of knowledge, enjoyment, and the subject.

The philosophical import of Pascal's triangle is that, given an indefinite series (the chance disruption of the game), one can nonetheless

49. Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture ix, 8–9.
50. Ibid., 10–11.
51. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture vii, 10.
52. Ibid., lecture viii, 5.
53. Lacan, *SXII*, lecture ix, 9; Lacan, *SXI*, 52–64.

discern and master a hidden order. To translate this into psychoanalytic terms: if psychoanalysis concerns not what can, but what cannot be known; i.e., the creative failure of knowledge within the unconscious, then it is the science of the discernment of that relationship to failure within the symbolic that is mastered. In other words it is the "process of discernment" that one masters.[54]

It is however the occurrence of the Fibonacci sequence within Pascal's triangle that provides the metaphor for the o-object and its relation to enjoyment. Recall that the structure of subjectivity includes a loss, not in the sense of the loss of an original unity; rather loss is original and constitutive. Should one presume an original enjoyment untainted by law, then the question of enjoyment turns upon its recuperation. However, if loss is original then what we seek to recuperate "has nothing to do with enjoyment, but with its loss."[55] Lacan introduces a name for this loss in relation to enjoyment: *surplus enjoying*:

> Namely, what responds, not to enjoyment but the loss of enjoyment in so far as from it emerges what becomes the cause conjugated by desire for knowledge and this animation that I recently qualified as ferocious that proceeds from *surplus enjoying*.[56]

Žižek provides perhaps the most succinct cultural example to flesh out this experience: caffeine-free diet Coke. "We drink the Nothingness itself, the pure semblance of a property that is effectively merely an envelope of a void." Subsequently, "the more you drink Coke, the more you are thirsty."[57] Žižek describes the "key to this perturbation" as "the surplus-*jouissance*," the *objet a* which exists (or rather insists) in a kind of curved space in which, the more you approach it, the more it eludes your grasp (or, the more you possess it, the greater the lack).[58] This is the real of enjoyment.

What then of the irrational number or "golden mean"[59] manifest in the fibonnaci sequence? It serves as an "equation of the symbolic process";

54. Or as Jean-Pierre Clero puts it: "there is a sort of indefinite series, but whose order of terms can be mastered. Psychoanalysis is not the knowledge of the psychical depths: it is the detection and precise spotting of the order of psychical acts, in their symbolic inscription which can be ignored by the imaginary of the signified." Cf. Clero, "Lacan and Probability".

55. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture vii, 10.

56. Ibid., 11.

57. See http://lacan.com/seminars3.htm.

58. Ibid.

59. Lacan, *SXX*, 48.

it expresses the relation of the subject qua o-object to the Other.[60] As Levi Bryant points out, the advantage of this mathematical rendering is that it refuses any notion that o-object is a residue from some pre-symbolic. Rather, it is an internal relation, the property of a structural operation.[61] Hence Lacan claims that in an analogical way that the golden mean "playing on proportion . . . steals away what is approached about enjoyment along the path of *surplus enjoying*."[62]

Grace and Revelation

Lacan tells us that key to enjoyment and the o-object is repetition: the "original point [genesis of the "o"] that makes of repetition the key of a process about which the question is posed."[63] The "o" is the excess that sets repetition, the search for the lost object, in motion. Lacan does not cite his earlier discussion from *Seminar II* on Kierkegaard and repetition, but the link is illuminating as it provides one of Lacan's earliest reflections on grace.

For Kierkegaard, repetition addresses the dilemma of selfhood: how does one reconcile the contingent nature of self-hood over time with its apparent unity? Plato's doctrine of recollection attends to this problematic by positing the transmigration of the soul: the soul is immortal and over the course of its transmigrations neither loses nor gains knowledge; learning is simply a matter of recollecting; i.e., finding out what we already know.[64] Lacan however endorses Kierkegaard's view that Christianity introduces something which upsets the easy recourse to truth: sin.

> Sin is from then on present . . . and it is by no longer following the path of reminiscence, but rather in following that of repetition, that man finds his way . . . so you can see the meaning of man's need for repetition. It's all to do with the intrusion of the symbolic register.[65]

60. Shingu Kazushige, *Being Irrational: Lacan, the Objet a, and the Golden Mean*, trans. and ed. Michael Radich (Tokyo: Gakuju Shoin, 2004) 98.

61. See http://larval-subjects.blogspot.co.uk/2006/11/rough-and-tumble-theory.html.

62. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture viii, 14.

63. Ibid., lecture x, 1.

64. For an account of recollection, see Plato, *Meno*, trans. W. Guthrie (Middlesex: Penguin, 1981).

65. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Seminar II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954–1955*, trans. S. Tomaselli (New York: Norton, 1991) 87–88.

Recollection, argues Lacan, is structured along the imaginary axis: it is a dyadic relation between the knower and what is known, such that one may know "wholly." According to this model, knowledge is as a "mirage," we draw from knowledge conclusions which affirms our desires rather than challenge them. In this way we can draw a link from recollection to the mirror stage. However, the symbolic introduces a "third term" into the dyad: an Other which disrupts the unity of imaginary relations; thereafter repetition becomes the search for "*l'objet foncièrement perdu*" (the fundamental lost object).[66]

The significant point for Kierkegaard is that it is only by grace (i.e., revelation) that we know we are in sin in the first place. Something has to come from without to disrupt the imaginary unity of self-knowledge.

For this reason, Lacan's characterizes Kierkegaard's split between paganism and Christianity as "the difference between the pagan world and the world of grace,"[67] prefiguring his work in *Seminar XVI* when he insists on "the difference between philosophical discourse, whatever it may be, and what we are introduced to by this nothing other than is distinguished by starting from repetition."[68]

In *Seminar XVI*, this Kierkegaardian line comes into focus when Lacan, in reflecting on the difference between the philosophical and theological/psychoanalytic tradition says "What distinguishes the God of the Jews, the one designated as being at the origin of monotheism, was not some development that the One was subsequently able to make," what distinguishes him is that "this god that is in question designates himself by the fact that he speaks."[69] Philosophy tries to derive truth from Logos, and we can derive Truth from Logos because we are ourselves graduations of the Divine Logos—what Lacan calls the "development of the One," the metaphysical presumption which makes for recollection. In Lacanese, this puts us on the path of the imaginary.

In Christianity however the Logos is revealed directly, placing it within the order of the real, the point of contact between Christianity and psychoanalysis. And to underscore the point, Lacan turns not only to the fact of God speaking, i.e., revelation, but also *what is revealed.*

66. Lacan, *Écrits*, 45.
67. Lacan, *SII*, 87–88.
68. Lacan, *SXVI*, lecture x, 6.
69. Ibid., lecture xxii, 4. See also Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture x, 8.

The Real Name of the Father

Lacan's reflections on God's revealed speech is initially occasioned by reference to Pascal in his "Introduction to the Names-of-the-Father" Seminar (1963):

> The God who made himself known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did so using the Name by which the *Elohim* in the burning bush calls him, which I have written on the blackboard. It is read as follows: *El Shadday*.[70]

As Lacan explains, conventional translators of the Septuagint tended to push the direction of interpretation into the categories of onto-theology, which Lacan equates with the imaginary. What this misses is the link between God's utterances at the bush from Exodus (Exod 3:14): אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*)[71] with the Tetragrammaton: YHWH (היה); "the name I do not pronounce." In this way he acknowledges first: the Rabbinic link made between the Tetragrammaton and *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh* (YHWH is the third person singular imperfect of the verb "to be" suggesting simply "He is," or "He will be"; i.e., the meaning of *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*).[72] Second, in a move which precipitates his claim as to the impossibility of the sexual relationship, he posits "the untranslatability of the Hebrew God into Greek metaphysics:"[73] To draw on the work of Kenneth and Julia Reinhard Lipton: the Greek translation pushes the interpretation of *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh* in the direction of a statement of predication or identity (e.g., "A=A"). By contrast, the oral repetition allows for an "incomplete semanticization of God's name, thereby crystallizing its "nonsensical character." In other words, the Name cannot be taken as a declaration of existence and especially substance; rather it is the "creative, legislative, and descriptive, instating within the apparently simple form of the statement a God otherwise than Being."[74]

And for this reason Lacan was able in his Seminar on *Identification*, to challenge the prevailing consensus on Freud's final text *Moses and Monotheism*. Instead of attributing the argument to the work of a dwindling mind, he argued that, "the fact that he [Freud] ended his discourse on Moses and the

70. Jacques Lacan, "Introduction to the Names-of-the-Father Seminar," in *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment* (New York: Norton, 1999) 81–96, 90.

71. Ibid., 90–91.

72. See http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11305-names-of-god.

73. Kenneth Reinhard and Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Revelation: Lacan and the Ten Commandments," http://www.jcrt.org/archives/02.1/reinhard_lupton.shtml.

74. Ibid.

way he did it, leaves no doubt that the foundation of Christian revelation is indeed therefore in this grace relationship.[75]

During *Seminar XIII*, the original context of Lacan's discussion of Pascal, and following a further reference to the revelation of God's name at the burning bush, Lacan makes the following remark:

> Now this indeed is what is recognizable in the original message through which there appears in History the one who changes both the relationships of man to the truth and of man to his destiny, if it is true—one could say that I have been dinning it into you for some time—that the advent of Science, of science with a capital S—and since I am not the only one to think what Koyré has so powerfully articulated—this advent of Science would be inconceivable without the message of the God of the Jews.[76]

Alexandre Koyré's masterpiece *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* challenged the positivist assumption at the heart of historiographers of science; i.e., that the development of science follows a linear and progressive path of unfolding truths towards a final given truth.[77] Rather, in the manner now associated with Thomas Kuhn, one must understand the way knowledge works within a given paradigm; i.e., the sets of relations which allow knowledge to work the way it does. Hence Koyré's contention that the "rise and growth of experimental science is not the source, but, on the contrary, the result of the new theoretical, that is, the new metaphysical approach to nature that forms the content of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century."[78]

Koyré's influence helps to explain why Lacan so deliberately engaged with theology. If psychoanalysis was to advance, then one must attend first and foremost to the metaphysical/theological paradigm within which such a science was conceived.

Grace and Revelation

Returning then to Pascal, the wager should be contextualized within the order of theology rather than philosophy, by which is meant, a discourse of grace and hence revelation; i.e., a discourse of the real. This is neatly

75. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan: Seminar IX, Identification 1961–1962*, trans. C. Gallagher. Unpublished, 14.3.62, lecture xiii, 126.

76. Lacan, *SXIII*, lecture x, 136.

77. See Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Radford, VA: Wilder, 2008).

78. Alexandre Koyré, *Newtonian Studies* (London: Chapman Hall, 1968) 6.

exemplified by Pascal's approach to grace which, fashioned by predestination, figures the question of revelation. If revelation were simply bold and extrinsic then humanity would know God in a direct way, but if God remains a mystery are we consigned to ignorance? Pascal offers an alternative:

> All appearance indicates neither a total exclusion nor a manifest presence of divinity, but the presence of a God who hides Himself. Everything bears this character. . . . He must not see nothing at all, nor must he see sufficient for him to believe he possesses it; but he must see enough to know that he has lost it. For to know of his loss, he must see and not see; and that is exactly the state in which he naturally is.[79]

What we have here, as John McDade highlights, is a dialectic of "seeing and not seeing" which reflects a *double-caesura*: the ignorance of the human mind through sin, and "the even darker mystery of the predestination of some to sight and others to blindness." God's will is obscure, and yet we must wager.[80] The double-caesura stands as the problematic in which the subject of psychoanalysis is conceived; the inconsistency on side of an Other and the inconsistency on the side of the other. And grace stands for the problematic of the relation.

Had Lacan spent more time on Pascal, he may have also developed his reading of the o-object and enjoyment in tandem with Pascal's scheme of progressive revelation within history according to which the "progressive disclosure of God [is] in direct proportion to the degree of divine concealment";[81] in other words, the more God is disclosed, the more obscured God becomes. God is initially both hidden and disclosed within nature, the disclosure of whom, Pascal argued is discernible only to some pagans. However, when God is more directly disclosed through the Incarnation, he is equally more hidden to the extent that neither pagan nor Jew, but only the Christians—be they heretical or otherwise—may discern God. And when he is most disclosed in the Blessed Sacrament he is most hidden, so that only Catholics can see him.

Does Pascal's scheme not highlight the real qua enjoyment through its curved space in which the more one approaches God the more God eludes one's grasp (or, the more you possess it, the greater the lack)?

However, one should note, as highlighted by John McDade, God's hiddenness for Pascal, as the Other is for Lacan, "is not of the order of God's

79. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, http://www.bartleby.com/48/1/8.html.

80. McDade, "Contemporary Relevance of Pascal," 189.

81. Ibid., 190.

mysterious and transcendent essence"[82] as one might expect within the works of Gregory of Nyssa or St. John of the Cross; rather, it belongs to the tradition of *Deus absconditus*: God's will to deliberately withhold from us something of God: the desire of the Other.

As Žižek points out, this makes for an "uncanny subject" who in responding in human relations must do so via a "third," a "terrifying" and impenetrable enigma who demands something of the subject which remains opaque nonetheless. Indeed, he goes as far as to suggest that "for Lacan, we do not have to evoke God to get a taste of this abyssal dimension; it is present in every human being."[83] Žižek may be right, we don't have to evoke God to appreciate this dimension, but we may have to invoke the theological heritage of the West to account more generally for the central structure of the Western subject in Lacanian terms.

Conclusion

Returning then to grace, if it remains "irreplaceable," it is not because it offers one concept amongst others to "add" to the Lacanian corpus. Rather, it is because it stands as the principle structuring of subjectivity and the real of experience. Grace refers us back to a God/Other whom we must question in the manner of the unconscious, but a God/Other to whom we must respond nonetheless given the uncertainty of the Other. What establishes this relation principally is the God who speaks and as such with whom one must negotiate enjoyment through the fall of an o-object. The imperative to wager given by Pascal can therefore be read in tandem with Lacan's further reworking of Freud's "Wo Es war, soll Ich warden": "there, where he is, in his field, namely the Holy Land, there is no question of obeying anyone but him [i.e., the unconscious]."[84]

And perhaps for this reason it does not do to ask what theology looks like after Lacan, or whether theology is either desirable or possible after Lacan; rather, we should ask, what were the theological shifts that made Lacanian psychoanalysis possible in the first place?

82. Ibid., 189.

83. Slavoj Žižek, "How to Read Lacan: From *Che vuoi?* to Fantasy: Lacan with *Eyes Wide Shut*," http://www.lacan.com/zizkubrick.htm.

84. Lacan, *SXVI*, 13.11.68, lecture xxii, 4.